

John Randolph to Andrew Jackson, March 27, 1832, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN RANDOLPH TO JACKSON.

Roanoke, March 27, 1832.

My dear Sir, The imperious duties of his office compelled my brother Mr Tucker¹ very reluctantly to leave me yesterday morning. The Court of Appeals being obliged to close its session in a few days his presence became indispensable (Mr Green not having been able to attend during the whole term) to form a court, and many most important judgements remaining to be given, and himself charged by the Court with preparing their opinions and their reasons in support of them, His absence therefore, at this juncture, would have been equivalent to the suspension of the functions of our own highest court of Judicature, to the incredible vexation and loss of suitors; amounting, in fact, to a denial of Justice. our mutual hopes that I had thrown off so large a mass of morbid matter as to justify the expectation that a crisis was approaching in my disease, has not been disappointed.

¹ Judge Henry St. George Tucker, Randolph's half brother.

I am very glad to learn that you do not intend to nominate a minister to the Court of England. and if you will give me leave to obtrude my advice upon you, I would suggest the expediency of if not delaying Mr Buchanan's departure yet contriving it so, as that he shall be a long time on his way from Paris to St. Petersburg, for if he consults his comfort or safety he will avoid a frigate or man of war—of any sort: For, whether English or American, they are the most uncomfortable and dangerous ships in the world even to the Admirals

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and Captains. The best is a good frigate; but when you take into consideration that her guns and equipage bring her low into the water, that 200 human beings can not find room hardly to turn round, and that without close hatches, which make a black Hole of Calcutta of all below, stifling even the ward room officers (and indeed the Captain him self where there is no Poop), you may judge of the discomfort and danger; for a sudden flare of wind would cause her to fill and sink before (as the saying is) you could say Jack Robinson. This I have no doubt is the true history of the disappearance, without being heard of, of 99 in a hundred of English and American Men of War. Although ill fitted to encounter a gale of wind yet there is less danger in a man of war in a storm than in the mildest and most deceitful weather. If ever she gets upon her beamends she never can *right* herself. Her armament prevents that; neither can the lower guns be got at to lighten her, and throwing over board the others could only aggravate the danger and ensure her destruction.

This is the secret of the loss of the *Royal George* who went down at Spit-Head with the brave Kempenfelt and 1200 men on a perfectly calm day in water as smooth and Land Locked as a mill Pond. In attempting to *Careen* the Ship they drew her “a *thought too much* on one side”, when she sunk and the Admiral, who was in the *Great Cabin* writing, and the whole crew were drowned.

There is a beautiful ballad which runs some how in this way—2

2 Cowper, “On the Loss of the *Royal George*”, imperfectly quoted.

“It was not in the battle—his hand was on the Pen— When Kempenfelt went down with twice six hundred men.”

Neither have the English with all their diving bells and surpassing knowledge of mechanics and unrivalled Industry, ever been able to remove this dangerous artificial shoal in the harbour—so fastly an[chored] is she by 130 heavy Cannon for altho rated at 100 she actually carried, I am told, that number.

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There are some other smaller but most cruel annoyances. The worst is the shrieks and yells of the men seized up to gang way whose flesh is tearing (or as the English *now* say *being torn*) off their bones by the Cat of a boatswain's mate. Except the Russian *Knout* there is no species of torture by *whipping* , if such it may be called, to compare with it. In the army they talk of 500 or 1000 lashes. But 12 dozen from a Boatswains mate would kill any man that ever lived, and if the wretch had a spite against the victim he could kill him dead with 2 dozen.

I moved to abolish whipping in the Army, because the rules and articles of war extend to the Militia when called into actual service, and I knew that our free holders sons would never endure and ought not to endure this infamous punishment, fit only for slaves, and even they are degraded by it.

When the Marquis of Hastings³ came home from his government of India, it is said that the officers of the *Starboard* Watch, under whose heavy military boots and *tramp* his lordship found his slumbers much disturbed, had orders to come on deck in *Slippers*. This gross breach of discipline (and insult into the bargain) some had the spirit not to brook. These were *arrested court marshalled* and Cashiered, upon charges got up for the occasion. (It is the e[a]siest thing in the world to find a stick to beat a dog, and a *naval* officer stands no chance against a vindictive and not over scrupulous commander). They who complied were *promoted*. Also that the men's mouths were stuffed with oakum and buried in strong ship's Canvass bags, that His Lordship (*our Lord Rawdon*) and his Lady (Countess of Loudoun in her own right) might not be annoyed by the shrieks of the men *seized* up to the Gangway. I had determined to mention this subject to you at sight and to bring it before Congress in Case I shall ever again have a seat in the House, for no earthly consideration could induce me to hold myself responsible to our "annual Mob", as Col. Jones used to call our assembly, when they were as children of light to our present race of sons of darkness. Having occasion to send an express

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3 Francis Rawdon Hastings, the Lord Rawdon of the Revolutionary War, governor general of India 1813–1822.

to night 12 miles to the C. H. with a letter for Mr Livingston I send this with which otherwise I should not have *bored* you.

Mr Buchanan's arrival in Petersburg will relieve my poor friend Clay from the most cruel and unjust of Laws. There is tenfold reason why the Chargé d'Affaires succeeding to the appointment abroad, by the absence of his principal, shall have an allowance of \$4,500, more than if he went from the U. S. (of course I mean where he is nominated by the Senate and approved by them). He is run to expenses that the other need not incur at all.

What you say upon the subject of exposing your *friends* feelings to insult whilst regardless of your own is of a piece with your whole character—noble, perfectly disinterested and high minded. In all my acquaintance with mankind I have never met with a character so perfectly devoid of the least taint of Selfishness as Yours. I suppose that I should have found less favour in the eyes of that honourable Body than Mr V. B. himself. Unless Mr V. P and his shadow, Hayne, should have thought they could gain $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 per Cent by voting for me. I am sorry for Hayne. He and his principal are damned with us beyond redemption and the few partizans that Calhoun had flattered and cajoled into the meshes of his net (such as Goode of Mecklenburgh etc: etc:) dare not now to lisp his name. Calhoun always had a knack of turning young men's heads but then he was young himself and with a great character for talents and yet greater for stern uncompromising publick Virtue.

This second Joseph turns out to be an old battered *He-Bawd* , another Sir Pandarus of Troy, *quoad procurement* of offices for his adherents in order to obtain the highest for himself. Pray let Mr Livingston read this and do not be surprised if you see me in your closet in less than a fortnight. Most faithfully and truly yours.

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P. S. . . . The Cabin etc: of our merchant men may be likened to the Car attached to a balloon.

In our Packets adroit and practised Stewards are ready day and night to supply all your wants and to suggest others that never might have occurred to you.

In a Man of war *all fires* are extinguished at a certain hour (nine I think) and I remember my agony when I could not get a bottle of hot water to apply to my stomach (on board the *Concord* []) because there was no fire in the *Galley* where all the Cooking is done for Captain, officers and crew. It is true they are soon afterwards relighted but take a long time to burn with any efficient heat.